

Questions for Discussion
Joint Select Committee on Public Health Financing
November 10, 2005

Spending on Washington's public health system increased by 18% from 1998 to 2004, after controlling for inflation and population growth.

- State department-level spending increased by 20% per state resident.
- Local department-level spending increased by 16% per resident.

So, what evidence is there of a crisis in public health financing?

- **How healthy are we?** What do the *Report Card on Health in Washington, The Health of Washington State* and other resources tell us about the health status of Washington residents? How healthy are we relative to those in other states? Are there intrastate disparities? Are there any local or statewide trends that are particularly encouraging? Particularly disturbing, or costly?
- **What does this say about Washington's public health system?** How does public health effect health status? What is the link between the health of Washington residents and the activities our public health system? Are there health indicators that are particularly telling with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the current system? What is the biggest concern?
- **What are the strengths and weaknesses of our public health system that available health statistics don't capture?** Are we prepared for emerging or potential health threats? How do we know? What about problems not within the scope of public health as it is traditionally defined -- could our system do more to address issues such as child abuse, domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse?
- **What does Washington's public health system need to do better or differently to address current or potential gaps in health status?** Will improving scores on the PHIP performance measures improve health status? How? How do we know? Which performance measures are most in need of improvement? Why? How will the health status of Washington residents be effected if existing performance levels are simply maintained or decline?
- **How do we achieve any desired improvements?** Additional funding? Redistribution of existing funds? Structural changes to the system? More efficient operations and management? Other options? How do we know that any given change will achieve the intended results?